BREAKING BUBBLES

by L. M. Myles

Characters:

THE DOCTOR
Space-time traveller

PERI
The Doctor's companion

SAFIRA VALTRIS (F)
A deposed empress, 50s

LARIS (M)
A senior interstellar prison transport officer, 40

TONDRA (F)
A junior interstellar prison transport officer, 30

AKROS (M)
A general loyal to Safira, 50

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1: INT. SPACESHIP BRIDGE

(FX: ENGINE HUM. REGULAR BLEEPS FROM CONTROLS: ALL IS WELL.)

TONDRA:
Power to FTL drive stable. Radiation levels normal. Oxygen levels — [normal]

LARIS:
Normal? Could you take your eyes off the controls for ten seconds and concentrate on the game? It's no fun winning this easily.

(FX: CHIPPER ELECTRONIC SOUNDS OF LARIS'S GAME.)

TONDRA:
Oxygen levels normal. (BEAT) There, done. Now, it's my turn?

(FX: CHIPPER ELECTRONIC SOUND.)

LARIS:
Tell me you're not going to do this for the whole trip.

TONDRA:
The regulations are clear, ma’am.

LARIS:
Tondra, if something unfortunate happens, believe me, we'll know about it.

2: EXT. A PALACE GARDEN

(FX: OCCASIONAL BIRDSONG, THE SOUND OF A FOUNTAIN NEARBY, LEAVES RUSTLING.)

PERI:
I've visited gardens like these at a chateaux in France, but we're definitely not on Earth. The leaves are all wrong.

DOCTOR:
Yes, I'd come to the same conclusion myself.

PERI:
Really?

DOCTOR:
Oh, yes. But well done for working it out too.

PERI:
All right then, if you're so clever, Doctor, how about you tell me where we are?

DOCTOR:
It could be any number of places. It's not as though formal gardens are limited to any particular time or place.

PERI:
In other words, you don't know.

DOCTOR:
Let's just enjoy the walk, shall we? I'd have thought you'd be glad to land somewhere peaceful.

PERI:
I am. I wouldn't mind taking a few cuttings too, but I'd rather ask if it was okay with whoever owns this place first.

DOCTOR:
There doesn't seem to be anyone around.

PERI:
I'd noticed, but this sort of garden must take a small army to maintain.

DOCTOR:
Perhaps it's their day off.

PERI:
Or someone likes their privacy and we missed the ‘no entry on pain of death’ sign.

[FX: SAFIRA APPROACHES AS PERI'S SPEAKING, WALKING ON GRAVEL PATH.]

SAFIRA:
There's no sign.

DOCTOR:
Hello! We didn't realise there was anyone else here.

PERI:
We were just admiring this beautiful garden of yours.

DOCTOR:
I'm the Doctor, and this is Peri.

PERI:
Hi!

SAFIRA:
I see... I wasn't expecting visitors. This is quite extraordinary. May I ask how you got here?

DOCTOR:
Oh, the usual way.

SAFIRA:
Which is?

DOCTOR:
We landed.

SAFIRA:
In a spaceship?

DOCTOR:
That's right.

SAFIRA:
I see. (BEAT) Well, where are my manners? I'm Safira Valtris. Very pleased to meet you both. I was about to have some tea in the pagoda. It's not much, but you're welcome to join me.

DOCTOR:
That sounds lovely, thank you. Tea, Peri?

PERI:
I don't suppose you've got any coffee?

DOCTOR:
I'm so sorry, you'll have to excuse my companion; she's an American.

3: INT. SPACESHIP BRIDGE

(FX: ALARM GOING OFF. OBNOXIOUS BEEPS AS BUTTONS RAPIDLY PRESSED.)

TONDRA:
What? What is it? What's happening?

LARIS:
(FX: BUTTONS BEEPING) What d'you think I'm trying to find out?

TONDRA:
(CHECKING INSTRUMENTS) I don't see any system malfunctions.

LARIS:
No, but there's been an internal security breach.

TONDRA:
Where?

LARIS:
Found it: the prisoner's cell, it's been locked.

TONDRA:
It's supposed - [to be]

LARIS:
It's supposed to be locked from the *outside*. Now it's locked from the inside too. She can't get out and we can't get in.

TONDRA:
Why'd she do that?

LARIS:
No idea, but we'd better get down there and find out. Whatever she's doing, it's not going to be good news.

MUSIC: TROUBLE ON THE WAY.

4: EXT. PALACE GARDEN, IN A PAGODA

(FX: CLINK OF PLATES, CUTLERY. TEA BEING POURED.)

PERI:
You've got such a great variety of plant life here. Is it all indigenous?

SAFIRA:
To the planet, yes. You've an interest in flora?

PERI:
I'm a botany student.

SAFIRA:
Ah. I designed part of this garden, but it's only ever been a hobby for me. I remember there being a lovely botanical garden a few hundred kilometres north of this one. There were plants from all over the Empire there. There used to be, anyway.

PERI:
What happened to it?

SAFIRA:
If you believe the rumours, the Emperor blew it up in a fit of pique... but I wouldn’t want to speak ill of our beloved sovereign.

(FX: EARTHQUAKE-Y SOUND. THE SHIP'S JUMPING FROM HYPERSPACE BACK TO NORMAL SPACE.)

PERI:
(STRUGGLING TO STAND UPRIGHT) What's happening? Is that an earthquake?

DOCTOR:
No, Peri, I don't think so.

MUSIC: FOREBODING.

5: INT. SPACESHIP CORRIDOR

(FX: QUAKING STOPS. BUTTONS ARE PRESSED.)

TONDRA:
The ship's jumped back to normal space, but we're not moving. If this is an escape attempt, shouldn't she be setting a new course?

LARIS:
Not if she expects another ship to come and pick her up.

(FX: IRRITATING BUTTON BLEEPS.)

TONDRA:
It's not just navigation, ma’am. I can't access anything. We're locked out of the whole computer system.

6: EXT. PALACE GARDENS, IN A PAGODA

PERI:
We're on a *spaceship?*

DOCTOR:
That's right, Peri. And that felt like we just made an unexpected leap from hyperspace to normal space.

SAFIRA:
You didn't know we're on a spaceship? One usually knows where one lands, Doctor.

PERI:
Not when one’s travelling with him, one doesn’t. What about all this? You can't tell me this whole garden is all on a ship. That horizon's got to be miles from here.

SAFIRA:
It's a holosensory recreation. It's meant to make my incarceration more tolerable during the long days between prisons.

DOCTOR:
Prisons?

SAFIRA:
Yes, Doctor. This is a prison transport. And I'm the prisoner.

DOCTOR:
Ah.

SAFIRA:
Don't worry, I'm not dangerous.

DOCTOR:
Well, you would say that.

PERI:
What did you do?

SAFIRA:
Deposed the Emperor.

DOCTOR:
Not a very successful deposition, if you ended up in here.

SAFIRA:
It was completely successful, Doctor. I ruled this Empire for almost ten years, and the life of every citizen was the better for it.

DOCTOR:
I take it not everyone agreed with that assessment.

SAFIRA:
Unfortunately not. I was betrayed, by people who cared more for glory and titles than the good of the Empire, and with their support the Emperor was able to regain the throne.

DOCTOR:
Well, you're still alive, at least.

SAFIRA:
Oh, yes. Executing me would set an unfortunate precedent. He's my cousin, you see. One can't be seen to be executing members of the Imperial Family. It might give the common people ideas.

PERI:
I guess democracy hasn't really caught on here, has it?

(FX: LOUD METALLIC BANGING)

SAFIRA:
Ah, my jailors have arrived.

DOCTOR:
They don't sound very friendly.

SAFIRA:
No, and they're going to be quite unhappy with me for the engine sabotage. As for you two, whatever I say, they're going to believe you're a party to it.

PERI:
Please tell me that doesn't mean they're going to shoot us.

SAFIRA:
I'm terribly sorry. Best finish your tea quickly.

7: INT. SPACESHIP, CORRIDOR (OUTSIDE THE CELL DOOR)

(FX: LOUD METALLIC BANGING)

LARIS:
(BANGING FIST ON DOOR) Open the door, Valtris. I swear if you don't unlock this thing, we'll blow it up.

TONDRA:
Ma'am, I doubt she can hear you.

LARIS:
Get the comms working then!

TONDRA:
I can't, ma'am. Even the non-essential systems are frozen.

LARIS:
How's that pulse cannon looking? You got it working? Or has she shut that down too?

TONDRA:
No, ma'am, it's ready.

LARIS:
Right, then this ought to be a very satisfying explosion.

(FX: PULSE CANNON TARGETTING AND FIRING FOLLOWED BY A VERY SATISFYING EXPLOSION.)

TONDRA:
We're in, ma'am.

MUSIC: DRAMATIC SURGE.

8: EXT. PALACE GARDEN

(FX: AFTERMATH OF THE EXPLOSION.)

SAFIRA:
Officer Laris, Officer Tondra, what a pleasure to see you both again.

LARIS:
Quiet, Valtris.

SAFIRA:
That's really no way to speak your Empress.

LARIS:
Not in the mood.

TONDRA:
Ma'am, please raise your hands, slowly.

SAFIRA:
That's much more pleasant. You see, Laris, respectful whilst still refusing to acknowledge that I was anointed and crowned.

LARIS:
Who are you two? How did you get in here?

DOCTOR:
I'm the Doctor, and this is Peri.

TONDRA:
Stowaways, ma'am. And almost certainly complicit in the sabotage.

DOCTOR:
Now hang on a minute — [we didn't]

TONDRA:
Ma'am, regulations regarding stowaways on Imperial prison transports are clear: summary execution.

(FX: SPACE GUN POWERING UP)

LARIS:
Tondra, this - [is not]

SAFIRA:
They're from Imperial Intelligence, you fools. I don't think my cousin will be too happy if you shoot two of his agents.

TONDRA:
They don't look like Imperial Intelligence agents to me.

LARIS:
No-one should have been able to get into this cell without us knowing about it.

DOCTOR:
Exactly. Unless they had higher authorisation, of course.

LARIS:
That doesn't mean I believe you, it means you've bought a few minutes to explain yourselves. So, *agents*, what are you doing in here?

DOCTOR:
Before you decided it was a good idea to put a large, smoking hole in the door, we were interrogating the prisoner.

LARIS:
I don't suppose she's told you what she's done to the ship? We've been locked out of the computer system, and the engines are dead.

SAFIRA:
Well, I'm delighted to hear everything's going to plan. If you'll excuse me, officers. (GRABS PERI)

PERI:
Hey! Let me go, what — [are you doing]?

(FX: MATTER TRANSPORTATION BEAM. PERI'S VOICE FADES OUT)

LARIS:
Where's she gone? Why's she taken your accomplice?

DOCTOR:
How should I know? Isn't the security here your responsibility, Officer? *You* should be telling *me* where my friend is and how you're going to get her back safely.

LARIS:
Listen to me, Doctor. I'm responsible for seeing that Safira Valtris arrives at her next prison. Whoever you and that woman are, you are getting in the way of me doing my job.

DOCTOR:
At the moment, I care rather less about your job than I do about what's happened to Peri.

LARIS:
Either your friend is in league with the prisoner, or she's been taken hostage. Either way, we find one, we find the other.

DOCTOR:
That was a short-range teleport so they must still be on the ship. How big is it?

TONDRA:
Not big, only about five kilometres, end to end.

DOCTOR:
Five kilometres? We'll have to locate them by conducting an internal scan.

LARIS:
But I told you, we're locked out of our computer systems —

DOCTOR:
Yes, well, maybe I'll be able to help with that.

LARIS:
First an Imperial agent, and now a computer engineer?

DOCTOR:
I have dabbled. What harm can it do to let me try? Either I succeed, and you regain access to your computer, or I fail, and you've lost nothing.

LARIS:
All right, Doctor, we'll take you to the bridge, but move slowly.

DOCTOR:
Just one question first.

LARIS:
Make it quick.

DOCTOR:
Peri. Will she be safe with this Safira?

LARIS:
That woman has bombed whole planets into dust to get what she wants. So, no, I shouldn't think so. Now move.

MUSIC: TERRIBLE PROSPECTS.

9: INT. PALACE LIBRARY

(FX: PERI AND SAFIRA REMATERIALISE)

PERI:
What just happened? Where are we?

SAFIRA:
Another part of the holosensory recreation: this was my palace library. I imagine something terrible's happened to the real one by now: my idiot cousin's probably burnt all the books...

(FX: BOOKS BEING TAKEN FROM SHELVES AND FLICKED THROUGH: SAFIRA IS SEARCHING THE LIBRARY.)

PERI:
If all this is just holograms, can't those soldiers shut it down whenever they like?

SAFIRA:
Not any more. I've got control of the ship and this projection, thanks to an appallingly large bribe and one highly unscrupulous electrical engineer.

PERI:
The Doctor, he's still with those two prison guards -

SAFIRA:
I'm sure he's fine. People tend to get very paranoid at the mention of Imperial Intelligence.

PERI:
We're not intelligence agents.

SAFIRA:
I know.

PERI:
Then why did you say we were?

SAFIRA:
I didn't want to see you killed on my account. And though I'd dearly love to know who you are and how you really got here, I've rather more pressing concerns.

PERI:
(PICKS UP BOOK) Hey, this book's about you.

SAFIRA:
Ah, yes, that one was published during my cousin's second reign: propaganda to discredit me.

PERI:
What's it doing in your library?

SAFIRA:
It's important to know what your enemies think of you, and what they want other people to think of you.

PERI:
Even the unflattering things?

SAFIRA:
Especially the unflattering things.

(FX: FLICKING THROUGH PAGES)

PERI:
It sounds like you started a lot of wars.

SAFIRA:
I started *one* war, Peri. It just went on rather a long time. And spread across a few dozen worlds. (FX: SMALL, METALLIC CLINK.) Peri, would you mind checking these books?

PERI:
Sure, am I looking for anything in particular?

SAFIRA:
Certain components were concealed within this projection. I was told they would be hidden inside one of these volumes. Unfortunately they neglected to mention which one.

PERI:
(FX: SEARCHING BOOKS) What exactly are these components for??

SAFIRA:
To enable my escape.

PERI:
Of course.

(FX: SHE OPENS A BOOK, SOME SMALL METAL COMPONENTS FALL OUT)

PERI:
Er... I think I've found them.

10: INT. SPACESHIP BRIDGE

FX: DOCTOR TAPPING AT KEYBOARD. COMPUTER BLEEPING NEGATIVELY.

LARIS:
Can you fix it or not?

DOCTOR: (ATTEMPTING TO ACCESS COMPUTER)
I don't know. You're going to have to give me more time.

LARIS:
Doctor, we're dead in space. I've got to assume that there's a ship on its way to collect the prisoner. So we have to get out of here as soon as possible.

DOCTOR:
Then I suggest you be quiet and let me concentrate.

TONDRA:
He's stalling, ma'am. Giving Valtris's rescue ship time to arrive.

LARIS:
If you think we're wasting time, feel free to go and search for the prisoner, Tondra. There are only about five hundred different places she could be hiding.

TONDRA:
Very well, ma'am.

(FX: TONDRA EXITS.)

DOCTOR:
There's something not right about all this.

LARIS:
Isn't that what you're meant to be fixing?

DOCTOR:
That's not what I mean. This computer system of yours isn't locked down, it isn't *there*. There's a very complicated lockout, but no actual system underneath. It's like... this computer is just an empty box!

LARIS:
Don't be ridiculous. The lights are on, the oxygen's flowing. If we've got no computer, how's everything still working?

DOCTOR:
That's a very good question.

LARIS:
My game's gone.

DOCTOR:
Hmm?

LARIS:
I left it there. A cube, about the size of my hand, lots of flashing lights.

DOCTOR:
It was new, this game? You'd only just brought it on board?

LARIS:
Yes. So?

DOCTOR:
Of course! It's the one detail she wouldn't know about!

LARIS:
What are you talking about?

DOCTOR:
This isn't your ship! This is all a holosensory simulation! We're still in the prison cell. When we walked out, we didn't walk back onto the real ship, we walked out into another part of the simulation.

LARIS:
So now what do we do?

DOCTOR:
We have to find the real way out! Come on! Back to the gardens!

11: INT. PALACE LIBRARY

FX: SAFIRA BUILDING GUN, PIECES CLICKING/SCREWING TOGETHER.

SAFIRA:
I hope I remember how to put one of these together. It has been a while.

PERI:
What is it?

SAFIRA:
A gun.

PERI:
Oh great.

SAFIRA:
Just in case of emergencies.

PERI:
That's hardly reassuring.

SAFIRA:
If it makes you feel any better, it also contains a communications device which will let me see what's going on in the rest of the ship.

(FX: TUNES IN DEVICE)

LARIS: (DISTORT, VIA SAFIRA'S GADGET)
That looks exactly like the hole I blew in the cell door.

(CONTINUOUS INTO NEXT SCENE)

12. INT: SPACESHIP CORRIDOR/PALACE GARDENS (CONTINUOUS)

DOCTOR:
Of course it does. She must have reconstructed it in perfect detail.

(FX: DOCTOR AND LARIS ENTER CELL TO EXT: PALACE GARDENS)

LARIS:
This is definitely the right palace garden? I mean, what if that wasn't the door we left through. And we've gone into another projection, or a projection of a projection, or — [a projection]

DOCTOR:
Don't think about it! You'll only give yourself a headache or, worse, you'll give me one.

LARIS:
How do we get back to the real ship? I only see the exit we came through.

DOCTOR:
The real exit has to be here somewhere. Do you remember where you were standing, when you came in?

LARIS:
Yeah, I came through here, just on the edge of the grass.

DOCTOR:
Really? You're sure? Go and stand there. Think back.

LARIS:
Maybe... maybe I was a few steps to the right.

DOCTOR:
Take a few steps to the right then.

FX: SHIMMERING/WARPING.

LARIS:
My foot! It’s vanished!

DOCTOR:
Just step back and it'll reappear. There, you see.

(CONTINUOUS INTO NEXT SCENE)

13: INT. PALACE LIBRARY (CONTINUOUS)

DOCTOR:
(DISTORT, VIA SAFIRA'S GADGET): That, Officer Laris, is where our exit is!

(FX: BUTTONS PRESSED)

SAFIRA:
A slight problem. It looks like my jailors have discovered my little ruse. Your friend, the Doctor, how is he with computers?

PERI:
Terrible. Doesn’t know the first thing about technology. He's got this phobia about computers in particular. Keeps thinking they're trying to take over the world.

SAFIRA:
You're not a very good liar.

PERI:
Look, we've got nothing to do with this. Please, don't hurt him.

SAFIRA:
I don't intend to. Peri, I've been shunted from planet to planet, prison to prison, for seven years. All I want is my freedom.

PERI:
Is that all? Or are you going to start another war once you're out of here?

SAFIRA:
You don't know my cousin. So long as he can squander his days devising fanciful entertainments, he leaves the actual ruling to his officials. And all they're concerned with is accumulating wealth and power.

PERI:
Of course, you're not at all interested in those things.

SAFIRA:
I won't deny I enjoy them, but I do care about the people of this Empire and delivering them from hardship.

PERI:
What would your cousin say, if someone asked him about you?

SAFIRA:
After he'd finished the incoherent ranting? He'd say that I was a jumped up general who didn't know her place. (BEAT) I am doing this for my people, Peri. For their salvation. You don't know anything about the situation.

PERI:
I know that in wars a lot of innocent people always end up dead.

MUSIC: FOREBODING INTO TRANSITIONAL.

14: INT. SPACESHIP BRIDGE

(FX: DOCTOR AND LARIS ENTER BRIDGE)

LARIS:
My game! Right where I left it. (FX: CHIPPER ELECTRONIC NOISE)

DOCTOR:
Then I think we can safely say this is the real McCoy. (FX: BUTTONS PRESSED) Yes, that's more like it. Now, let's see if I can get these computers working again.

LARIS:
This isn't good.

DOCTOR:
Actually I think I'm making some progress.

LARIS:
Not that, this. We've still got sensor data coming in: there's a blip on the edge of scanning range. Looks like a warship. No identification signal.

DOCTOR:
Maybe they haven't spotted us, maybe they're just passing by.

LARIS:
No such luck. They're on a direct course. It has to be Valtris's rescue ship. If we're lucky we've got twenty minutes until they arrive.

DOCTOR:
I'm not sure that's going to be enough time.

LARIS:
Well, do *something*.

(FX: LOTS OF BUTTONS PRESSED)

DOCTOR:
Right, I've managed to gain access to your communications system. If there's anyone you can contact for help, now's your chance.

LARIS:
I suppose there might be an Imperial patrol nearby. (FX: BUTTONS PRESSED) I've sent an emergency call requesting military assistance. (FX: BUTTONS PRESSED) Now for a word with Valtris.

15: INT. PALACE LIBRARY (CONTINUOUS)

(FX: COMMS OPEN)

LARIS: (OVER COMMS)
Valtris, can you hear me? Valtris?

SAFIRA:
Officer Laris, so you found your way back to the bridge then? And got some control of the ship back. Well done.

LARIS: (OVER COMMS)
I suggest you surrender, Valtris; I've summoned an Imperial flotilla to these co-ordinates.

SAFIRA:
Even if you have, they won't get here before my ship does.

(FX: COMMS OFF)

SAFIRA:
The Doctor did this. Those two haven't the skills or knowledge to unlock the computer systems. So who are you people? Why are you here?

PERI:
I told you, we're just travellers.

SAFIRA:
Just travellers who happened to show up the moment I try to make my escape?

PERI:
I'm telling you the truth. We're not on anyone's side.

SAFIRA:
No? Then if the Doctor can help my captors... you can help me.

16: INT. SPACESHIP BRIDGE

LARIS:
I think I can get some visuals from inside the cell now. (FX: BUTTONS) Yes. We can see how Valtris and your friend are doing.

DOCTOR:
Thank you, Laris.

LARIS:
Not a problem. (FX: SCREEN PICTURE RESOLVING) Here we go...

SAFIRA: (VIA MONITOR)
You're coming with me to the airlock, Peri.

PERI: (VIA MONITOR)
You could just let me stay here.

(CONTINUOUS INTO NEXT SCENE)

17: INT. PALACE LIBRARY (CONTINUOUS)

PERI:
What do you need me for? Unless I'm a hostage.

SAFIRA:
Let's not make this any more unpleasant than necessary, Peri.

(FX: LIBRARY DOOR BANGS OPEN)

TONDRA:
Don't move, either of you! Put that gun on the table, Valtris. Slowly.

(FX: SAFIRA PUTS GUN DOWN ON TABLE)

SAFIRA:
Officer Tondra. You intend to kill me?

TONDRA:
Oh, you have no idea how much I've longed for this moment. I had arranged for you to expire in an unfortunate accident, a life support failure, but this is so much better. To shoot you attempting to escape. To look you in the eye as I pull the trigger. It's more than I'd ever dared hope for.

SAFIRA:
I am a member of the Imperial Family and the Emperor's cousin. If you harm me, you will suffer. Your family will suffer.

TONDRA:
Not much of a threat, *Majesty*. My family is dead, killed when you bombarded my home-world.

SAFIRA:
That must have been such a long time ago. So do you feel good now your revenge is finally at hand? Do you imagine my death will give you peace of mind? It won't. What you're feeling now, it will never get any better.

PERI:
She's right, Tondra. Killing is never the answer. It just leads to more revenge, more killing, more people suffering like you have suffered.

TONDRA:
I don't care. I don't care.

(FX: SPACE GUN CHARGING)

SAFIRA:
I've had enough people point guns at me to know when they're capable of pulling the trigger. You're not a killer, Tondra. Put it down.

TONDRA:
No.

SAFIRA:
Then shoot me. Go on, get it over with. You want your revenge, then kill me.

TONDRA:
I... (FX: PUTS GUN DOWN)

SAFIRA:
That’s it, Tondra. Lower your weapon. Now we can (STRIKES HER) talk!

(FX: SAFIRA OVERPOWERS TONDRA. KNOCKS HER OUT.)

PERI:
Is she dead?

SAFIRA:
No, just unconscious. I should probably kill her while I have the chance.

PERI:
You can't be serious.

SAFIRA:
If we had time for a trial, the penalty would be execution.

PERI:
But there hasn't been a trial. You can't just shoot her in cold blood.

SAFIRA:
(HESITATES) No. No, I suppose not.

(FX: SAFIRA POWERS DOWN HER GUN. COMMS BLEEPS)

AKROS: (OVER COMMS)
This is General Akros calling the Empress Safira, do you read me?

SAFIRA:
I'm here, Akros. What's your status?

AKROS: (OVER COMMS)
Majesty, we're about to dock with the prison ship, but an Imperial flotilla has just jumped into this sector, closing fast. Estimate fifteen minutes until weapons range.

SAFIRA:
Continue docking procedure. I'll be at the airlock shortly. Valtris out.

(FX: COMMS)

SAFIRA:
Alright, Peri. We’re leaving. Try not to do anything stupid.

(CONTINUOUS INTO NEXT SCENE)

18: INT. SPACESHIP BRIDGE

PERI: (VIA MONITOR)
Or what? You'll shoot me?

SAFIRA: (VIA MONITOR)
If you refuse to co-operate, yes. Now move!

(FX: MONITOR OFF. LARIS COLLECTS WEAPON FROM GUN LOCKER.)

DOCTOR:
Where do you think you're going, Officer?

LARIS:
Where d'you think? The prisoner's escaping, my colleague's been overpowered. I have to stop her.

DOCTOR:
Did it escape your notice that she's holding Peri hostage?

LARIS:
I'm sorry about that, Doctor, but my first duty is to stop Valtris getting off this ship.

DOCTOR:
And I think I have a way to do that. Sit down.

LARIS:
Doctor, I really don't — (think)

DOCTOR:
Your computer game, if you please.

(FX: LARIS HANDS OVER THE GAME, THE DOCTOR BREAKS IT OPEN.)

LARIS:
Hey, d'you know how much that cost?

DOCTOR:
Whatever it was, it came cheap. It may be about to save your life. Pry that access panel off, would you? (FX: METAL CLANGING OF PANEL BEING REMOVED) We may not have control of your ship's computer, but this is a rather sophisticated little game you've got here. With a small amount of ingenuity, I should be able to link it into your ship's computer and use it to get access to some of the other systems.

(FX: CLANG OF OTHER SHIP DOCKING)

LARIS:
Better hurry up, Doctor. That was the rebel ship docking.

19. INT. SPACESHIP, OUTSIDE AN AIRLOCK

(FX: SAFIRA AND PERI RUNNING. COMMS BLEEP.)

AKROS: (OVER COMMS)
Majesty, the Imperial flotilla is almost within weapons range, but we can't raise our defence shields while we're docked.

SAFIRA:
We're approaching the airlock now. I'll be with you momentarily. Valtris out.

(FX COMMS OFF)

PERI:
Do you really think the other ships are going to let you get away?

(FX: AIRLOCK OPENING.)

SAFIRA:
I wish them the very best of luck in stopping me.

(FX: AIRLOCK OPENS)

SAFIRA:
After you, Peri. Into the airlock. Take your time, please, no sudden movements.

(FX: THEY STEP THROUGH THE AIRLOCK AND ARRIVE IN THE PALACE GARDEN.)

SAFIRA
What the — ?

PERI:
We’re back in the palace garden! We’re still inside the hologram!

SAFIRA:
What - ? Oh, I see. This is your friend's work, isn't it? Very clever, Doctor! You may have trapped me in my cell but I still have a ship out there.

PERI:
But you can't make it to your ship before that flotilla starts firing on it though, can you?

SAFIRA:
(BEAT) No. I can't. But I can still make a fight of it.

PERI:
Is that what you want? You start firing on that other ship, they'll fire back, and people will die. This escape of yours, no-one was meant to get killed, were they? You said all you wanted was to get away.

SAFIRA:
So... what? I should give up? Surrender?

PERI:
Yes! If you don't want anyone to die today, you have to.

SAFIRA:
Throw everything away? Everything I've worked for? Just like that?

PERI:
Ask yourself, how many lives is your freedom worth? How many people have to die? How many deaths do you want on your conscience?

SAFIRA:
I... don't know...

PERI:
It's like you said to Tondra. She wasn't prepared to kill... and I don't think you are, either.

SAFIRA:
You're right: this was meant to be a bloodless escape. And now... (FX: COMMS BLEEP) Akros...abort mission. Return to base. Do not engage the enemy ship.

AKROS: (OVER COMMS)
Majesty, are you certain?

SAFIRA:
You heard me: abort. Get your ship to safety. I'll contact you when I can. Valtris out.

(FX: END COMMS THEN OPEN COMMS))

SAFIRA:
This is the Empress Safira to Officer Laris. I offer you my surrender.

20: EXT: PALACE GARDENS

FX: HATCHWAY WHIRRS SMOOTHLY OPEN.

DOCTOR:
There, that's most of the damage from your pulse cannon repaired. One prison cell, back in working order.

LARIS:
Thank you, Doctor. I've put Officer Tondra in one of our less lavish cells.

PERI:
What's going to happen to her?

LARIS:
That's for the courts to decide.

SAFIRA:
They might very well conclude she's a hero for what she tried to do, but this incident will still be considered a political embarrassment; someone is going to pay for it. If you're not careful, Laris, that someone will be you. So let me help you.

LARIS:
Help me? How?

SAFIRA:
If you allowed me to go free, my supporters would be grateful. They'd make sure you, and your family, were protected.

LARIS:
Your supporters are only interested in stirring up another revolution.

SAFIRA:
And I could stop them, if you released me. I can't negotiate a peace settlement while I'm a prisoner. Think about it. I'll be in the library when you've decided.

(FX: SAFIRA EXITS VIA GRAVELLY PATH.)

DOCTOR:
You're thinking about it, aren't you?

LARIS:
She could be right; if she was free, and willing to talk about peace...

DOCTOR:
I hope she means it.

PERI:
From what I saw today, I think she does.

LARIS:
Well, at the moment, I've got an Imperial flotilla insisting on sending a squad on-board. I'm sure they'll want to talk to you. I'll have to ask you to stay in this cell for now. You are still technically stowaways, after all.

DOCTOR:
Not a problem, Officer. Bye for now.

(FX: LARIS EXITS. CELL DOOR LOCKED.)

DOCTOR:
Peri, you know we never did get to the centre of that hedge maze.

PERI:
The hedge maze? That would be the one with the blue box parked somewhere inside it?

DOCTOR:
Yes, that’s the one. Come on. With my infallible sense of direction, it shouldn’t take us long to find it...

PERI:
No?

DOCTOR:
No. No more than a couple of hours at most...

(END)